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ABSTRACT

The ability to retain many songs in memory makes them an important tool for language learning, but one that is often underused. A commercially-produced set of materials called "Singlingual" puts everyday German words and phrases to well-known tunes, a technique students can use to develop their own songs. In addition to readily-available published language games, teachers can also use popular television games in class, such as guessing the missing word in a sentence; pairing students and having one from each pair leave the room, to return and guess a word chosen by the other; having teams of students choose ten letters from piles of vowels and consonants, and make as many words as possible from them; guessing occupations in the style of twenty questions; and choosing which of three definitions applies to a chosen word. Scoring variations can add interest to games, and teachers can also devise their own versions of Trivial Pursuit. A list of useful materials is appended, including songs, and albums in Spanish and French. (MSE)

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USING SONGS AND GAMES IN THE LANGUAGE CLASS

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Eleanor Moussoulides

USING SONGS AND GAMES IN THE LANGUAGE CLASS

The fact that the mind is capable of retaining a seemingly infinite number of songs or chants has been known for thousands of years. Most of the major world religions use singing or chanting as a means of teaching doctrine and ensuring that what has been taught is retained. Most people can recall the words of a large number of songs, hymns, advertising jingles and the like, which they have never made any conscious effort to memorize. Furthermore, it would seem that children and adolescents have a particular facility for this. Yet language teachers often overlook this important means of language learning, partly perhaps because of shyness about singing themselves and/or a lack of suitable material. It is true, of course, that music is such an important part of teenage culture that the average pupil is "heavily into" heavy metal or whatever and may greet your favourite record with howls of mirth and supposedly innocent demands of "Oh, is that the kind of music they have in France/Spain/Germany/Italy etc.?" Not encouraging! It is best, usually, to introduce at 1st year level simple songs set to the kind of lively music which will appeal to that age-group. It is impossible to define this music further, but intuition, experience and advice from colleagues and pupils will help you find it. At the end I have included a list of suitable songs kindly provided by Mary Ruane and by some members of the work-group at the Convention. Occasionally, the hit parade or the Eurovision Song Contest will prove an ally, as was recently the case with "Ein bisschen Frieden" and "99 Luftballons". It is always worth recording the Song Contest, just in case!

A recent development which has been invaluable to teachers of German was the appearance of the "Singlingual Method", published by Langenscheidt under the title of "Eine kleine Deutschmusik". This method uses useful phrases from everyday speech set to well-known tunes and comes in a well-presented (although expensive) book and a cassette. Some of the tunes used are: "She'll be coming round the mountain", "The Blue Danube", "Santa Lucia", and "Twinkle, twinkle, little star". Some of the phrases are: "I am a foreigner and don't speak German well", "Please speak more slowly", "What's that in German?", "What's the weather like?" etc., covering many useful language functions. However, valuable as this method is, I feel that it is even more interesting to go a step further and ask the pupils to compose such a song themselves. An example of this activity is a typical formal letter, which has become "de rigueur" for all students of French, now that it appears on Department of Education French papers.

To the tune of "Do you want your oul' lobby washed down":

Monsieur, je vous serais très reconnaissante
De bien vouloir m'envoyer
Des dépliants et quelques renseignements
Pour mon projet de géographie.

Je voudrais également savoir les noms
Des campings de votre région,
Car mes parents souhaitent passer quelques semaines
Dans le Perigord et la Dordogne.

Je suis une lycéenne irlandaise
Dans un collège dans le Galway.
Veuillez agréer, monsieur, l'expression de
Mes sentiments très distingués.

(The teacher should make it quite clear that envoyer does not rhyme with géographie etc.)

Perhaps teachers who manage to produce useful songs with their classes, would like to send them to me and they could be published?

To justify the use of games in language learning is hardly necesary for readers of these proceedings and would be to waste valuable space. There are many excellent books of games, so rather than waste the space at my disposal, I will concentrate on adaptations of well-known television games. Many of these are really only old favourites in a slightly different guise, but I have found that to use the current television version generates greater interest among the pupils, especially when they have to explain the rules to the dim-witted teacher, who always gets it wrong.

Blankety-Blank - The object of this game is to find a missing word in a sentence. As played on television, a variety of words might fit. To ensure maximum participation, divide the class into teams and have each team choose a representative for the panel. Then the teacher reads out the sentence without the missing word and each pupil writes down a suitable word. The winning team is the one where most members have written the same word as their representative on the panel. Teams can also take it in turn to supply suitable sentences for the others.

Three Little Words - Pupils find partners and in turn, one of each pair leaves the room while the class chooses a word. The pupil then re-enters and his partner must try to guess the words in question from the one-word clues given by his partner. For example, the word which has been chosen is house:

A. Cottage
B. Country
A. Hut
B. Shed
A. Bungalow

B. House

As the name suggests, only three guesses are allowed on the television version, but I have found it more satisfactory to allow more guesses and award points to the couple who can guess with the lowest number of clues.

Countdown - A number of cards each bearing a letter are prepared and arranged in piles of consonants and vowels respectively. The pupils are divided into teams and each team in turn requests ten letters, specifying whether they want vowels or consonants. These cards are propped up on the ledge against the blackboard or stuck up with Blu-tack (3M post-it notes are also useful). The teams then compete to find the greatest number of words which can be made up from the given letters. To avoid all that preparation, it is also possible simply to write a long word on the board and let the pupils make up words using the letters contained in it. This is also a feature of the television game.

What's my line - A pupil chooses an occupation and the others ask questions to discover what it is.

Call my bluff - A word is given with three definitions, only one of which is correct. Each definition is given to a different pupil, who explains the definition. Teams decide which pupil is telling the truth, and points are awarded to the team which is correct. A dictionary may be used to find unlikely words and definitions, or the definitions may be invented by the pupils.

Quiz games are at present enjoying a renewed popularity. The new feature is the scoring. The "Blockbusters" scheme of scoring may be made on an OHP transparency or the honeycomb pattern could be drawn on a large sheet of paper and the spaces covered with differently coloured cards, cut out to fit. I will not try to explain how it works - teachers should watch at least one of these programmes and then ask their pupils to demonstrate.

"Trivial Pursuit" is only one of the quiz-type board games currently in vogue. As above, the teacher (or why not the pupils?) will have to make up suitable questions, but using a commercial board and counters etc. will add a new dimension to the age-old question-and-answer routine.

USEFUL MATERIALS

GAMES

Lee, W. R., 1965: Language Teaching Games and Contests. Oxford University Press.

Nye Dorry, G., 1966: Games for Second Language Learning. McGraw-Hill.

Wright, A., D. Betteridge and M. Buckby, 1979: Games for Langu Learning. Cambridge University Press.

SONGS

Spanish

- Mocedades
- Julio Iglesias
- Maria Ostiz
- Parchis
- Canta la Tuna
- Villancicos Espagnoles
- Cantos Regionales
- M Dolores Pradera
  (Available in Spanish record shops)
- T.V. Spanish children's programmes

French

1. Jo Akepsimas chante pour les enfants
   (album) Sm Arc en ciel 30 751

   Titres: Le Tour de France
   Si tu pars en voyage
   Jacotte
   Mon anniversaire

2. 24 Chansons et 24 Comptines
   (2 albums) A.D. 2.038 AV 4258 AUVIDIS

   Titres:
   Chansons Passe, passe, passera ...
   Mon âne
   Cadet Rousselle
   Ne pleure pas Jeannette
   Canons Dans la forêt lointaine
   La cloche du vieux manoir
   Comptines Bonjour, Madame Lundi
   Les 7 chemises de l'archiduchesse
   A Paris, sur un cheval gris
   Les pinsons

3. Les Chants de Noel

   (a) Noëls de France - Jacques Douai
   (album) Unidisc 30 1349 mono-stereo

Titres: Entre le boeuf et l'âne gris
Il est né le divin enfant

(b) En choeur, chantons Noël
A coeur joie, sous la direction de l'Abbé P. Thoir
(album) Gravure Universelle 842.024 Py Philips

Titres: Douce nuit, sainte nuit
Peuple fidèle
Noël noir

(c) Nana chante Noël - Nana Mouskouri
(45 Tours) Livre disques Philips 6274-013

Titres: Douce nuit, sainte nuit
Le petit sapin

4. Les plus célèbres chansons de France pour les enfants
Jacques Douai 33/30 Unidisc UD 30-1287

Titres: J'ai du bon tabac dans ma tabatière
C'est la mère Michel qui ...

5. Anne Sylvestre

- Chansons pour ...
(45 Tours) ABCDISQUE 1 - SACEM 778031

Titre: Pour être sage en auto ...

- L'école
(45 Tours) MERCREDISQUE 4 - SACEM 778004R

Titres: A la recré
Comptine à compter

- Les nouvelles Fabulettes
(album) MERCREDISQUE GEANT 1. 33 i. No.598054

Titres: Le gâteau
Un froid de canard

Available on loan from: Ambassade de France, Services Culturels, 1 Kildare St, Dublin 2.